

We are at our three month mark since we departed FT Hood, and LTC Howard and I would like to thank all the family members and friends of the Talons for all the support you all have provided; we appreciate the care packages that all of you have sent. We personally thank everyone who is praying for the Soldiers' safe return to their loved ones.

We have recently been added to the Any Soldier Inc. This organization started in August 2003 as a simple family effort to help the soldiers in one Army Unit. However, due to overwhelming requests, on 1 January 2004 the Any Soldier effort was expanded to include any member of any of the Armed Services in harm's way. You are welcome to visit 2-8 IN web page at the following URL:

[anysoldier.com/WhereToSend/Dynamic.cfm?SEQNO=19156](http://anysoldier.com/WhereToSend/Dynamic.cfm?SEQNO=19156). We have received the first donation in the form of a DVD movie "Vengeance Valley" starring Burt Lancaster, from Ron and Brigitte Carbaught from Entriken, PA. The Talon family extends a warm thanks for their donation; this movie will be available to all our Soldiers, in a room we call "The Oasis", a multi-purpose room where our Battalion Chaplain conducts Bible study, Soldiers go to relax, watch movies, or enjoy some quiet time reading a book.

LTC Howard and I would like to share some of the great things the Talon Soldiers are doing, and the things that keep LTC Howard and I fired-up and motivated, especially during the times when things don't seem to be going our way. I say that because we get recharged with adrenaline when we hear or see the great things your Heroes are doing. On Fridays, we ask all the companies to nominate a Hero of the Week, and provide us with a written explanation of why they selected this individual for the honor. We keep all the written nominations so that when we need a burst of motivating adrenaline, we can read what your great Heroes are doing. After reading two or three, we are ready for anything. You will notice that there are nominations for Soldiers who don't leave the wire. In the Talon family you don't have to leave the wire or be in a combat arms field to be a Hero; every Soldier is important in the efforts to combat terror, and we recognize all contributions, hard work, dedication, and selfless service. I would like to share some of the nominations for Hero of the Week with you. LTC Howard and I hope that it has the same effect on you.

## **HHC**

SPC Nguyen is the BN logistical clerk. He is responsible for requisitioning all Class II (all perishable items) and Class IV (all construction material). He is also responsible for the maintenance of all equipment in the S-4 Shop. In addition to his daily duties, he also provides force protection on one of the entry gates to our FOB. Most recently, he played a major role in the re-location of the BN Shop and supply warehouse, better known to Soldiers who live in FOB Kalsu as Home Depot.

SGT Lanning Samuels established a digital database and several trackers designed to properly annotate and maintain patient information and disposition. His initiative facilitated the ability to track patient transport, and patient care from point of receiving to

evacuation. SGT Samuels' patient tracking increased our patient flow communication by 50%. His efforts ensure critical information is readily available at a moments notice to all levels of command.

## **A CO**

SPC Carlson Travis recently attended the mine detector class. During a large operation, SPC Carlson was conducting a cache sweep with other dismounted members. His mine detector registered something along a dirt mound. The area was unearthed and 3000 7.62mm rounds were found in two large black plastic boxes covered in plastic. Four AK47 machine guns were also found during the subsequent cordon and search.

SPC Alon Paul manned the TOC for 12 consecutive hours consisting of three patrols, two QRF missions, and 1 Unmanned Aerial reconnaissance mission. Plus, he made all radio checks and sensitive items reports. His attention to detail kept patrols alerted of IEDs in the area and was able to assist the QRF in maintaining their ability to respond quickly to any mission. As an E4, SPC Paul operated the company command post at an echelon above his own.

1SG Jeffrey Wells successfully planned and constructed a lightweight yet durable canal crossing device. This device can be easily and quickly employed by only three dismounted personnel and yet is strong enough to cross any canal. 1SG Wells took it upon himself to go above and beyond the call of duty and constructed an amazing device.

## **B CO**

SPC Stanton has once again established himself as a key member of this platoon. Not only has he, as a tanker, quickly grasped the basics of infantry squad tactics, but acts as a peer trainer without guidance. This fact is evident in our most recent air insertion mission. SPC Stanton automatically assumed point man and while clearing an objective, led the way during detainee operations.

SGT McDonald runs Cobra Mike (Company Command Post) in an outstanding manner. He helped set up battle tracking systems that allow for quick trend analysis and continues to handle the company's admin requirements taking care of Soldier's issues. He provides the company leadership with the flexibility to concentrate on mission requirements knowing that the routine daily business is completed to a high standard. He created a completely digital database to track soldiers' promotions, leaves, and many other various elements.

## **C CO**

SPC Thomas Gaede has set himself apart as the best clerk in the Battalion. He wears dual hats as the training room NCO and company clerk. SPC Gaede does both jobs with distinction and pride. He does the job above and beyond any expectation or duty description. Some of SPC Gaede's achievements include: mail operations, leave

packets, training room issues, tracking awards, promotions and PERSTAT. Although he has no formal training in these areas, he has excelled.

SPC Spears proved extremely capable by moving up from loader to gunner on his platoon leader's tank. While dealing with multiple IED situations as well as small arms incidents, his Platoon Leader was able to focus on command and control without any worries about the tank and force protection. This shows that SPC Spears is technically proficient beyond his peers.

SSG Boatwright arrived at the scene of an IED attack and took charge of the situation. The IHP vehicle that was struck resulted in a catastrophic kill of the vehicle. He recommended we tow the IHP vehicle back to their police station with our vehicle. SSG Boatwright then proceeded to prep both vehicles for the movement back to the IHP station. The IHP vehicle was strapped to one of the HMMWVs and on the way back caught fire due to a puncture in the gas tank. SSG Boatwright dismounted, pulled up to the vehicle, and cut the recovery strap while the IHP vehicle erupted into flames. He then jumped into his vehicle and drove it a safe distance from the burning vehicle. SSG Boatwright then told the crew to get back on the HMMWV. SSG Boatwright's rapid decision making and initiative saved both the HMMWV and the crew from serious injury. SSG Boatwright's display of selfless service and personal courage are a direct reflection of the core army values.

SFC Orr and his platoon have maintained their vehicles to the highest level setting the standard not only for C CO but for all of 2-8 IN. Their vehicles have the cleanest interiors in the battalion. If this platoon is not out on missions they are in the motor pool maintaining their 4 tanks and 3 up-armored HMMWVs.

## **D CO**

SGT Juan Tienda was recognized as Hero of the Week on 26 February 2006 for finding an IED that would have been catastrophic had he not found it. It was due to his vigilance that so many are still alive today. Besides being the one who spotted the IED, he also ensured his crew, truck, and weapons were ready for the follow on mission. SGT Tienda also trained his driver to drive on his night vision goggles at night, rather than ever having to depend on using white light outside of the FOB. SGT Tienda, through dedication to perfection in all that he does, has saved the lives of all of his crew.

SPC Kendall Barnes is a hero because his quick memory and keen alertness enabled his platoon to identify and search suspects that he had seen on a previous mission. In addition to this, SPC Barnes was also able to successfully identify an IED. Finding this IED has saved the lives of his entire crew. SPC Barnes continues to use his skills to help his crew and his platoon.

## **E CO**

SPC Strowmatt distinguished himself as an outstanding soldier. He displayed professionalism, competence, and commitment to fellow soldiers by performing very well as a lead vehicle gunner during the week's combat patrols. He displayed his skills as a combat engineer by overseeing the design, layout, and emplacement of the sandbag and gravel pathways that lead from the barracks to various facilities, including the CP. His dedication, motivation, and commitment to mission accomplishment set the example for others in the platoon to follow.

SPC Reynolds distinguished himself as the communications expert within the company by his motivation and persistence to get the company's commo to standard. Remotely dealing with two separate battalions, SPC Reynolds would not take failure as an option and worked to get two HMMWVs' digital systems fully mission capable while simultaneously maintaining other platforms within the company. SPC Reynolds pushed the commo shop to provide him with the support and equipment necessary to accomplish his mission. His motivation transcended itself in the Company's ability to maintain flawless communications throughout the week.

## **E FSC**

PFC Robinson helped the squad accomplish the task of preventative maintenance on 20 pieces of equipment and dispatching 10 pieces of equipment that is vital to the support of 2-8 IN. His knowledge on various pieces of equipment was invaluable during the three days that we had to get all equipment dispatched. He also supported the FOB with 24 hr operations as the petroleum supply specialist on duty at the 300,000 gal retail site.

SPC Boyer has played a key role in ensuring that HHC and E FSC have fully mission capable vehicles to accomplish their mission. Since arriving at FOB KALSU, SPC Boyer has had a hand in replacing every major assembly that has come into the shop, including some vehicles that he has never had the experience to work on. He has been extremely helpful in training new soldiers to better their MOS proficiency. SPC Boyer has also been filling in as the section leader while his NCO is on Entry Control Point guard, keeping his subordinates and NCOs informed of issues that are going on in the section. He has been on several recovery missions outside the wire, ensuring that the damaged or stalled vehicles were moved out of the danger areas in an expedient and safe manner. SPC Boyer is a great credit to the maintenance platoon.

PV2 Amanda Charles was recognized as Hero of the Week on 19 February 2006 for filling in for her boss when he went on leave for a month. In the absence of her leader, she brought a digitized tracking system to fully mission capable in the company command center. She did two communication security changes with no problem. She was on call 24 hours a day to tackle any problems that might arise. She uses all resources at hand to solve problems. She is currently learning computer information to allow her to

better help her company. She shows tremendous initiative and consideration in all aspects of the army.

SGT Douglas Dellere is a hero of the week because he recently took over as the NCOIC of the East Gate ECP. Immediately upon taking over the gate, SGT Dellere made recommendations to the Force Protection Cell of the Mayor's Cell on vulnerability and weaknesses he identified at the gate. He devised a plan that would divert the pedestrian traffic away from the vehicle traffic allowing the guards to remain focused on their sector and not be distracted. SGT Dellere's plan took shape and has established a walk-in gate separate from the vehicle traffic gate increasing the security and overall force protection for FOB KALSU and the tenant units. These actions are a direct reflection of SGT Dellere's professionalism attention to detail and tactical proficiency.

The experiences our Heroes are having has helped them grow and mature in so many ways; for example, our Soldiers are quickly learning the Iraqi culture from working with the interpreters to engage with the locals. The mechanics' conduct battle damage assessment and recover vehicles from the most dangerous highway in the world. They make repairs on vehicles that would normally be turned over to higher maintenance. The communicators, or signal Soldiers, maintain our highest operational rate ever and are not satisfied with anything less than 100%. The cooks manage and assist KBR with feeding over 2,500 Soldiers and civilians with food nearly as good as Ryans in Killeen. The fuelers manage and maintain 200,000 gallons of fuel on a daily basis, and conduct 24/7 refueling operations. The drivers are continually on the road transporting supplies and equipment to keep operations rolling. The supply personnel order the proper equipment and right amount of supplies. The combat arms Soldiers (Infantry, Armor, Scouts, Combat Engineers, Forward Observers, Field Artillery, and Intel) have grown and matured in different ways that would be very hard to express in words. These are the Soldiers who are where the rubber meets the road; they are training the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and the Iraqi Highway Patrol. They are the ones who are winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, handing out school supplies, soccer balls, candy, and humanitarian aid bags, and treating the Iraqi people with dignity and respect. They are also the Soldiers who are detaining the bad guys. Today in our Commander Battle Update, one of the company commanders stated that they received gun fire in a neighborhood yesterday. The people were very grateful that we returned today, and they thanked us for not having a fire fight in their neighborhood that would endanger the lives of innocent bystanders (women and children). This is one of the things that has made us most proud of our Soldiers. When the bad guys have given a clear reason for our Soldiers to use deadly force in accordance with the Rules of Engagement, our Soldiers have chosen to keep the high moral ground and persuaded them to surrender. The Talons as a whole are putting terrorists behind bars in record numbers.

I have saved the best for last; our Chaplain's two man team, Chap Hicks and his assistant, CPL Abell, have connected very well with all the Talons. They are the cornerstone of our spiritual and religious support and religious training. I have to believe they get all their strength and power to do what they do directly from the Lord. They are

everywhere and always at the right place, at the right time when they are needed. The Talons have been blessed with such an outstanding religious buddy team.

In closing, I would like to share with all of you the briefing that all Talons receive before they go on R&R Leave. I'm going to focus more on the Talon brief, keeping in mind that this will not cover what the Chaplain or the medical personnel brief. Most of you are probably wondering "Why is he sharing this information with Talon family members back home?" Well, the reason for me sharing this info is to ask for your assistance in keeping our great American Heroes safe and always from harm while on leave. I'm sure most of you have heard the horror stories of Soldiers who have served in combat and, upon return, have had an accident.

The briefing always starts with a roll call and then telling your Heroes that LTC Howard and I want them to enjoy the leave and their time with their loved ones and make it a memorable time. No driving for the first 48 hours; motorcycle riders must wear all safety gear DOT helmet, long sleeve shirt, gloves, long pants, boots, and a reflective vest. I discourage drinking alcohol, but if they do drink, not to do it to the point where they would put themselves or others in any danger. Have a plan for everything they do. In the Army we use what is known as the Five Point Contingency Plan, and we use the acronym G.O.T.W.A. To help us remember, "GO TWA", like the Airline. "G" stands for Going "Where am I Going?" "O" stands for Others "Others I'm taking". "T" stands for Time "Time I expect to be gone". "W" stands for what to do "What to do if I don't come back". "A" stands for Actions, my actions and your actions, if I don't come back or if my plan goes bad. Your actions if your plans change. For example:

G = (Going) I'm going to Burger King

O = (Others) I'm taking my brother Joe

T = (Time) I plan to be gone for one hour

W = (What) If I don't return in one hour call Joe's Cell Phone

A = (Actions) If my plans change, and I will take longer than an hour, I will call you. If the car breaks down or for any other reason I can't drive, I will call you so that you can pick me up. If your plans change and you are not going to be home, I'll call Uncle John (let Uncle John know he is the back up plan). Always have an alternate plan to fall back on.

The bottom line is Be Safe. When in doubt with what to do, we tell our young Soldiers to call someone, and parents are always a good choice, because parents will always give good advice. Enjoy your leave with your loved ones. Again, LTC Howard and I want to thank all for your support. "First at Normandy"

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